



News Release

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National Taxpayer Advocate Issues Annual Fiscal Year Objectives Report to Congress

WASHINGTON – In an annual report to Congress, National Taxpayer Advocate Nina E. Olson outlined her objectives for the Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) for the coming fiscal year.

"During 2003 the emphasis will be on advocacy in action to protect the independence and impartial perspective of TAS," said Olson. Additional objectives include strengthening the handling of advocacy proposals, monitoring the processing of TAS referred cases to the operating divisions, implementing a strategic training plan, refining the staffing of TAS offices and managing the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel.

In the June 30 report, which is required by law, Olson also reviewed TAS accomplishments during fiscal year 2002 to date.

Olson noted that advocacy is best illustrated by three interrelated concepts that are fundamental to the operation of Taxpayer Advocate Service - independence, impartiality, and confidentiality.

"It is the role of Taxpayer Advocate Service employees to advocate on behalf of taxpayers," Olson said. "The TAS employee's job is not done when he or she closes out a particular case. They have a responsibility to think systemically about that case."

The report is divided into the following five subjects:

- Taxpayer Advocate Service Systemic Advocacy
- Taxpayer Advocacy Service Casework Advocacy
- Taxpayer Advocacy Panel
- Taxpayer Advocacy Service Personnel and Staffing
- Taxpayer Advocacy Service Communications Strategy

The report provides in-depth information about each subject. Areas of particular interest include an overview of TAS advocacy initiatives in fiscal year 2002; the areas on which TAS will focus in fiscal year 2003; an overview of the new agreements with the IRS operating divisions in handling TAS referred cases; plans to improve access to TAS through toll-free numbers; and on-going research and marketing efforts to identify and reach taxpayers in need of TAS services and improve practitioner awareness. The appendix of the report contains statistics on fiscal year 2002 receipts and closures of cases and a timeline showing the evolution of the Taxpayer Advocate Service.

(more)

To review the report in its entirety, visit the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov/pub/irs-utl/tas03obj.pdf

The Taxpayer Advocate Service helps individuals solve ongoing tax problems with the IRS and recommends changes to prevent problems from happening in the future.

A taxpayer may qualify for the assistance of a taxpayer advocate if he or she:

- Is facing a significant hardship due to an action taken by the IRS;
- Is on the second attempt to resolve a problem after going through all normal IRS channels;
- Has not been contacted by the date promised or has experienced a delay of more than 30 days past normal processing time to resolve an issue.

Taxpayers can call 1-877-777-4778 (toll-free) to request the assistance of a taxpayer advocate.

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